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To the Student

You are about to embark on an exciting adventure. This can be all the more exciting, if you will look upon the computer as something to be mastered and not as something to be feared or something that might master you. You should take care to evaluate the results that the computer produces and not accept them as faultless. That is not to say that the computer is going to make many mistakes. In fact, under normal conditions, the computer will execute your instructions exactly. Mistakes in the results of a program RUN are usually caused by errors in the instructions written by the programmer. However, it is possible to write apparently correct instructions that give incorrect answers if the instructions carry the computer beyond its capacity.

Learning to program a computer is a complicated process. You will find that a combination of experience and "book learning" will serve you well. There are certain things that you cannot possibly know without being told and there are things that you will probably learn more easily, if you can learn by experience. A good plan might be to read some text, until you think you have enough to write a program, write it, and try it on the computer. Then with this experience, reread that text and read further until you think you can write another program. You will find that each new program will make the text more understandable and as you continue reading, the writing of the next program will come more easily.

I hope that you are stimulated by your work in programming to bring to the computer your own new and exciting problems to be solved. Above all, to be successful, you will have to give of yourself.

GOOD LUCK!